

Knapp family shows strength of early pioneers in Clark County

By SALLY ALVES

Camas (Grass Valley) pioneer Henry Monroe Knapp was born in Wyoming County, N.Y., on Jan. 16, 1829. At the age of 21, Knapp came overland to the Oregon Territory arriving in October 1850. He lived for awhile in the budding community of what was to be LaCamas, and was listed in the 1850 census as living in House 87.

On May 26, 1853, when he was 24, Henry married Rachel Fisher, the 24-year-old daughter of Michael and Eliza Fisher of the well-known pioneer Fisher family. She was born Jan. 28, 1829, in Hardy County, Va., and had lived with her parents and five brothers and sisters in Missouri. In 1850, the adventurous Fisher children said goodbye to their parents and left Missouri traveling westward by wagon train, originally planning to end up in California. However, they turned their wagons west to Oregon when they heard that opportunities were greater there.

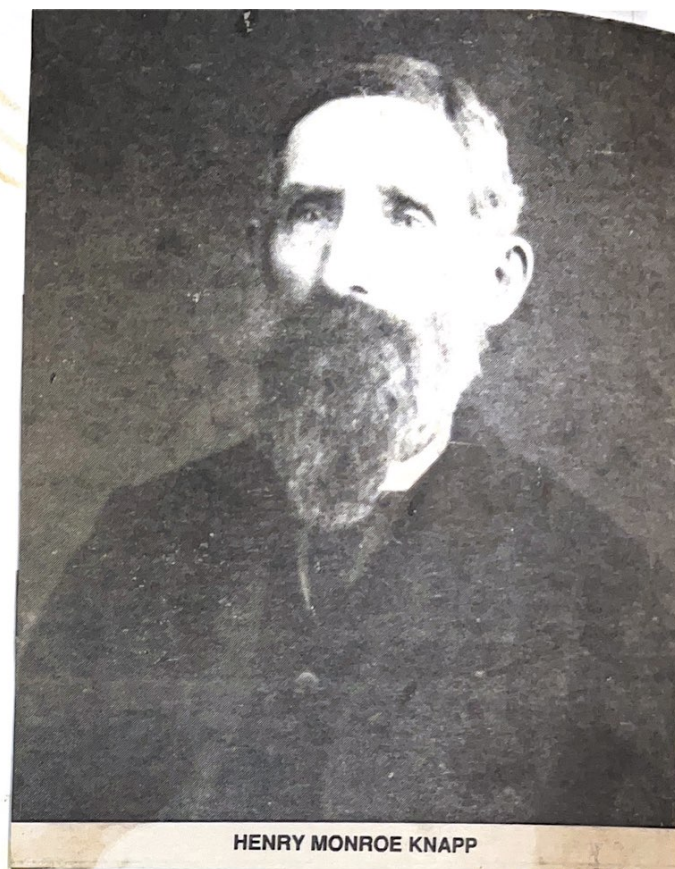
Because East Clark County was sparsely populated at that time with the Oregon Trail

migration just beginning, it was only natural that lovely, courageous Rachel Fisher would soon meet and become engaged to the distinguished and eloquent Henry Monroe Knapp who was already making his mark in the area.

In August of 1853, the same year he married Rachel, Knapp filed for a Donation Land Claim of 320 acres next to the claim of John Hicks at Grass Valley. He traded his property in LaCamas and began building up his new homestead.

Active in politics from the time he arrived in Clarke County, Knapp served as county auditor from 1852-53, and as county assessor in 1860. In 1859 and 1866 he was elected and served as a member of the Territorial Legislature. Being a very strong Democrat, he felt no Republican could be trusted! It is written record that Knapp gave a powerful speech on Territorial Suffrage (the woman's right to vote) while being a member of the legislature. Although be-

See KNAPP page 12



HENRY MONROE KNAPP

Knapp married his housekeeper

Continued from page 11

coming ill and unable to finish the speech during its delivery to the legislature, all agreed it was a remarkable oration. In addition to his political and civic duties, during the Indian Wars of 1855-56, Henry served under Capt. William Kelly in the Clark County Rangers, Second Regiment of Washington Volunteers.

Henry was kept extremely busy with his land, farm, horses, cattle, politics and military activities, which took him away from home for long periods of time. But, still, Henry and Rachel Knapp managed to have six children between 1853 and 1863.

First born on May 14, 1854, were twins — James and Sarah — who lived for only four years and died on the same day, Oct. 13, 1858. The first Knapp child to pass away, however, was a son, Plinny, who was born Jan. 11, 1857, and lived only nine months.

In 1859, a year after the demise of the twins, another son, Oliver H. Knapp was born. The 1860 Clark County Census listed the Knapp family. First was H.M. Knapp, 31 years old and a farmer, then Rachel E. Knapp, 30 years old, one year old Oliver H. Knapp was the only child, but there was a farmhand named John Adams who was 35.

After the 1860 census was taken, in late December of 1860, a daughter, Olive Georgina, was born. Three years later, in 1863, a sixth child, Ella Adelia Knapp arrived.

Just a few months after baby Ella's birth, on Dec. 18, 1863, 34-year-old Rachel Fisher Knapp passed away. She had endured the overland trip from Missouri by wagon train, and had survived the rigors of clearing the land in a new territory and building a homestead. But, the trauma of giving birth to six in the family home and having to bury three finally did her in. She was buried with her children in the historic Fisher Cemetery. On her tombstone, Henry Knapp had inscribed "Gone, but not forgotten."

At 34, Henry Knapp was left a widower, with the responsibility of caring for three children under the age of four.

Although full of sorrow for his lost wife, Knapp wasted no time in getting remarried. In 1865, barely a year after Rachel's death, he married 14-year-old Anna A. Huffman, who had been working as a housekeeper in the Knapp household. Anna had come to Clark County with her family from Whitesides County, Illinois and was swept off her feet by the dynamic Henry.

One year later in 1866, Henry and Anna had their first child, Andrew J. Knapp. He grew up to become LaCamas Post Master in 1887. In 1888, Andrew married Grace Belding who was the daughter of early settler, Horace Belding.

Also in 1866, Henry donated one acre at the edge of his property for the future construction of a small log school building which, once it had been completed, was aptly named "The Grass Valley School," thus becoming the first school in East Clark

County. Henry made this generous donation because his children from Rachel were becoming of school age, and along with the other children of the valley, had no local place to attend school.

The second child born to Henry and Anna was Henry Adelbert Knapp, who was born April 2, 1868, and named after his father.

In 1874, the first Camas post office was established in the Henry M. Knapp farm house in Grass Valley, four miles northwest of Camas. The office was named South Plain. This was nine years before the townsites of LaCamas was platted in a virgin forest preparatory to clearing the site for a paper mill and adjacent village. Knapp was to be the only post master ever appointed at the South Plain site.

On June 15, 1878, 17-year-old Olive Georgina died and was buried in Fisher's Cemetery. This left only two children alive from the Henry Monroe Knapp/Rachel Fisher marriage — Oliver, 19, and Ella, 15.

Oliver was fortunate to survive the dangers of pioneer childhood, and lived to the age of 80, dying in 1939. He worked for many years at the paper mill and was married to Mary A. Knapp, who died in 1951.

Rachel's youngest daughter, Ella, grew up to live a long, full life, marrying twice, first to Adam Schwoebel of Mill Plain on May 17, 1879, who died of cancer in 1895, then to A.C. Rinehart, a widower. Ella died in September of 1915 and was buried next to her first husband and two of her children in the Fisher Cemetery.

Finally, in 1878, 10 years after Henry Adelbert Knapp's birth, a third child was born to Henry Monroe Knapp and Anna Huffman. They called him Charles W. Knapp. Although no record could be found of his death, it is said Charles became an invalid and died quite young.

Continuing to be active in community affairs as well as family affairs, Henry M. Knapp was responsible for starting many of the granges in the area, including Mill Plain 24 (now defunct) and LaCamas 74. He was elected deputy master of the Oregon State Grange in 1874 and helped in the formation of many subordinate granges in the next 15 years, including the LaCenter Grange in 1874, where he was a Deputy Grand Master. At the organizing convention for the Washington State Grange held in Camas, Sept. 10, 1889, Knapp was elected to the state executive committee. In political matters, he was present for the signing of the Washington State Constitution.

Henry Monroe Knapp died on July 10, 1892, when he was 63. The monument at his grave site states "This simple monument marks father's bier, and those he loved in life, in death are near." At the time of his death the Knapp homestead was a fertile 475 acres with a huge three-story home where large parties had been held quite regularly.